Republic of the Philippines
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HON. FRANCISCO T. DUQUE III
Secretary
Department of Health
Manila

AN URGENT APPEAL

SIR:

In behalf of the people of Bacolod City, may we most earnestly and urgently appeal for the following:

1. That DOH provide Bacolod City with at least 1,000 units of UTM "swab" test kits for COVID-19 as soon as possible, and then with more to regularly follow as supplies of these kits become available at your end;

2. That a testing center for COVID-19 be established in Bacolod City as soon as possible to service both Bacolod City and the Province of Neg. Occidental.

URGENCY OF THE APPEAL

As of today, Bacolod has recorded 11 PUIs and 1,123 PUMs. It also received confirmation from DOH-Regional Office in Iloilo that one PUI already tested positive.

With these statistics, it is quite possible that the actual number of positive cases could be more but this remains a matter of speculation only because our City has no supply of the "swab" kits to test potentially positive patients. This is very alarming for us and could compromise the health and safety of our people despite the usual preventive measures taken of social distancing, prohibition against mass gatherings, encouraging people to stay home, voluntary closures of malls, city boundary check-up points, sanitation drives, etc. As commonly said "Forewarned is forearmed". In our prevailing situation, however, we are not getting the alert signals we need because we have no "swab" test kits available.

We understand that the DOH will provide 100 units of these "swab" kits which will arrive tomorrow. However, out of these 100 units, only 20 units will be allocated for the Bacolod City Health Office with the rest to be shared among the Regional Hospital in Bacolod, the Province of Neg. Occidental, and as buffer stock. Sir, this is heartbreakingly inadequate.

While we understand that your sourcing of these "swab" kits is also strained due to the need for it in Metro Manila and Luzon, is it still possible please to immediately allocate more for Bacolod to supplement the 20 units that we are expecting soon from the DOH as previously mentioned?

Presently, while we know that the "swab" test kits for COVID-19 cannot be bought anywhere else in the Philippines but can be sourced only from the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (or RITM)-Manila through the DOH, we have no other alternative but to beg for these supplies directly from you because our present need is **great and urgent.**

ON THE TESTING FACILITY

Inasmuch as RITM-Manila is the only biolab in the Philippines now that can read the "swab" samples from PUMs and PUIs of COVID-19, we do not get the results until several days after. The intervening travel days to RITM contribute to this longer turn-around time.

However, we were informed yesterday that biolabs will be put up soon in Cebu and Iloilo to also provide the Visayas Region with the testing capability for viral infections. Sir, please consider putting up one also in Bacolod because it would be highly inconvenient for us to still send our sample specimens to Iloilo and Cebu considering the lack of transport facilities triggered by the ongoing border quarantine lock-downs at this time. Whichever government agency will be in charge of this facility, our City will be willing to contribute to the construction cost thereof and for the training of lab technicians from the City that will help operate it.

Sir, please help us. We need these "swab" test kits and biolab as soon as possible. Thank you and God bless.

ATTY. EVELIO R. LEONARDIA
City Mayor